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Fifty-eighth session

9th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 24 September 2003, 10 a.m.
New York

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte ..... (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

The President: I need to get the cooperation and support of delegations, and not only with regard to starting the meeting on time. I have observed that while speakers are at the rostrum, a lot of discussion takes place that causes some disturbance. The old saying that urges you to do unto others as you would like them to do unto you is pertinent: when you are at the rostrum, you would not want discussion to be taking place in the form of a sidebar. I would therefore be really grateful if some attention could be paid to this matter.

In addition, I would appreciate it if, at the conclusion of a speaker's presentation, there would be a little order in leaving the Hall without making it difficult for the next speaker to get the attention of the Hall. People have travelled great distances to be here, and we owe them the courtesy of listening to them in silence and paying some attention to what they have to say. I really wish to thank you in anticipation for your cooperation and support in this matter.

Address by Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique

The President: The General Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Mozambique.

Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Chissano: Allow me, at the outset, to join previous speakers in congratulating you, Sir, on your election as President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. We would also like to commend your predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, for the manner in which he guided the proceedings of the Assembly during the previous session. I would likewise like to commend the Secretary-General for his relentless efforts to turn the United Nations into an effective instrument for international cooperation in the search for, and the preservation of, peace and security.

The United Nations family has recently lost some of its best servants. We mourn, in particular, the tragic death of Sergio Vieira de Mello, a dedicated servant of our Organization. We would like to reiterate our deepest condolences to the United Nations, the Government of Brazil and Sergio's family.

We also mourn the passing away of Anna Lindh, Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was an outstanding diplomat and defender of the United Nations. Her departure is a major loss for humankind, as she fought for a world order in which every nation could live in peace, harmony and prosperity. We wish to reiterate our heartfelt condolences to the people and Government of Sweden, as well as to her bereaved family.

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I have come to this session of the General Assembly as a messenger of the peoples of Mozambique, and of Africa as a whole — a messenger of peoples who are engaged in consolidating political, economic and social reforms. Today more than ever before, the peoples of Africa believe in the strength of their will, cohesion and unity. They believe in realizing the potential of their human and natural resources and capacities. They believe in learning from past experiences, good and bad, to restore peace and stability and to generate wealth and prosperity throughout the continent. The peoples of Africa are emulating the experiences of countries like my own, Mozambique, where after years of armed conflict a new era of peace and gradual, but steady, development has been taking place during the past 11 years. During those 11 years, we have made continuous progress in consolidating peace and democracy. We are now engaged in the process of preparing for our second municipal elections, which will be held on 19 November 2003. In 2004 Mozambique will hold its third general and multiparty elections to elect the President as well as members of Parliament. The peace and socio-economic stability that prevail in our country have created an enabling environment for domestic and foreign investment, which are pivotal for the generation of employment and for the reduction of poverty.

The gross domestic product of Mozambique's economy grew at an encouraging rate of 7.7 per cent last year, which has resulted in increased social-service allocations in the national budget. That is all the more important given the fact that Mozambique, like many other countries in southern Africa, is still facing a humanitarian crisis that is the result of continuing unfavourable weather patterns that have stricken the entire region for several years. We urge the international community to respond favourably to the recently launched appeal for humanitarian assistance for southern Africa.

As part of its efforts to fight poverty, the Government is implementing a plan of action for the eradication of absolute poverty, which aims to maintain the current average economic growth rate of 8 per cent and to reduce absolute poverty to below 50 per cent by 2010. With the objective of creating a national vision for development in the next 25 years, the Government of Mozambique has launched its Agenda 2025, a national strategy for the future of the country based on a constructive dialogue with all political parties and stakeholders.

Last July, Mozambique had the honour of hosting the Second Assembly of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union. During that Assembly, we took important decisions that laid down the foundations of the African Union and that will contribute to the effective implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). As expressed in the Maputo Declaration, the commitment and political will of African countries to take effective and concrete measures towards the implementation of NEPAD reflects the recognition of the fact that the primary responsibility for the implementation of that initiative rests with the peoples and Governments of Africa.

In the course of the past two years, in order to give coherence to NEPAD matters within African Governments, we have emphasized the creation of an institutional framework to oversee the implementation of NEPAD at the regional level so as to integrate NEPAD priorities into our national development programmes and create institutions to manage those priorities. In that connection, we must also highlight the fact that NEPAD includes an African Peer Review Mechanism, whose objective is to foster the adoption of policies, standards and practices conducive to political stability, high economic growth, sustainable development and accelerated regional and continental integration. We have already assembled a "panel of wise persons" to lend its assistance to the review process that will soon be under way.

International support for the implementation of NEPAD is essential. NEPAD should be the framework within which the international community, including the United Nations system, concentrates its efforts on Africa's development. In that connection, Africa's development partners are urged to continue to lend their assistance, with a view to translating into reality their pledges of support to NEPAD.

That is the main agenda of the African Union, which seeks to build a strong foundation for democracy, good governance, peace, stability and sustainable development, as well as to create better living conditions for all of Africa's peoples. We recognize that that represents a colossal challenge for present and future generations of African leaders, as it was when we created the Organization of African

Unity (OAU) 40 years ago and committed ourselves to liberating Africa as our main goal.

In Maputo we have also dealt with the issues of peace and security, for they continue to be the major challenge in Africa. It is for that reason that we have reiterated the importance of the entry into force of the Peace and Security Council, which will be an important body of the African Union that will deal with issues related to conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Step by step, and with the continued support of the international community, Africa is steadily discharging its responsibilities for the maintenance of peace and stability in the continent.

In keeping with the OAU Algiers Summit decision of 1999 on unconstitutional change of Government, the coordinated action of the African Union, the Community of the Portuguese-Speaking Countries, the Economic Community of Central African States, Nigeria, South Africa and other key players, enabled President Fradique de Menezes of Sao Tome and Principe to return to power, foiling an attempted unconstitutional change of Government.

The recent positive developments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the formation of the Transitional Government and the Parliament, the appointment of army command structures and the deployment of the forces of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) in Bunia, have lent new momentum to the peace process in that country. We must not allow that process to be derailed. All of us, including neighbouring countries, have an obligation to support the Congolese people and its Government in their long struggle for peace and stability.

Following the departure of President Taylor from Liberia, on 18 August 2003, we witnessed the signing at Accra, Ghana, of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. That Agreement covers a wide range of issues, including the cessation of hostilities. More importantly, it provides for the establishment of a transitional Government that will assume its responsibilities on 14 October 2003 until the holding of credible general elections in October 2005.

Allow me pay well-deserved tribute to President Kufuor of Ghana and President Obasanjo of Nigeria, and indeed to all the member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), for their critical role in that process. Regional leadership and international support for the peace process in Liberia will be meaningless if Liberians themselves fail to meet their obligations regarding peace and stability in their country. We would also like to commend the Security Council for its action on Liberia in support of ECOWAS efforts. We welcome the adoption of resolution 1509 (2003), which established the United Nations Mission in Liberia.

With respect to Burundi, we Africans have discharged our responsibilities by establishing an African mission in Burundi. In that context, I am happy to inform the General Assembly that, prior to my departure from Maputo, I bid farewell to the Mozambican contingent of peacekeepers to be deployed to Burundi. They are joining South African and Ethiopian forces in a clear demonstration of our commitment to peace and stability in Burundi and in the subregion. In that regard, I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the British Government for the assistance it has extended to us.

We appeal to the Security Council to adopt a resolution formally endorsing that mission, and to take the necessary measures to provide political, financial and logistical support to it. Failure to act decisively will lead to a deterioration of the situation, with serious implications for the stability of Burundi and the subregion.

The African Union and ECOWAS took prompt measures after the recent coup d'état in Guinea-Bissau to help the people of that country to return to constitutional legality. We are pleased to inform the Assembly that they have already selected by consensus a President and Prime Minister, who are going to lead a transitional Government. They have also developed other bodies to prepare the country for elections, which are to be held soon. We appeal to the international community to render its valuable assistance to Guinea-Bissau so that it will be able to overcome its dramatic social and economic situation as soon as possible.

In the Horn of Africa, we must continue to encourage Ethiopia and Eritrea to work together, with the support of the United Nations, to strengthen peace, stability and good neighbourliness and to overcome the difficulties that continue to exist. The ongoing peace

processes in Sudan and Somalia raise our hopes that lasting peace will soon be achieved in the region.

We welcome the lifting of sanctions against Libya and the settlement reached between all parties concerned, which will enable us to bring that issue to a close.

The stabilization of the situation in Angola, Comoros and Sierra Leone are clear signs that, despite the difficulties, Africa is making strides towards the attainment of lasting peace, stability and socio-economic development.

The peoples of Africa are fully engaged in building a continent of hope. The African Union, along with the regional economic communities, is committed to addressing the challenges faced by the continent. Africa is endowed with human and natural resources that can contribute decisively to African development. What we need is an opportunity to integrate ourselves into the world economy; an opportunity to benefit from globalization and increased interdependence; an opportunity to benefit from liberalized trade, finance and investment, instead of suffering from marginalization and exclusion; and an opportunity for access to science and technology, in particular information technology.

That will be possible if, among other things, the international community continues to seek viable and effective ways and means to address the debt burden, the low levels of official development assistance and foreign direct investment and the issue of market access for African products in developed countries. With regard to the latter, we are disappointed that the Cancún conference failed to produce positive results.

The recent tragic events that have claimed so many innocent lives are a painful reminder of the fact that international terrorism continues to represent a serious threat to peace and security in the world. Those events have also further demonstrated that no country is immune from the scourge of terror and that we will have to take concerted action to effectively address that issue. The United Nations remains the most appropriate forum to find the best ways and means to combat terrorism.

In recent times, some sceptical people have wondered whether the United Nations has lost its credibility and relevance. The answer is clear: the role of the United Nations as the main instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security has today been vindicated more than ever before. As the Secretary-General has correctly pointed out, it is through the United Nations that we can all find the much-sought legitimacy of action in tackling issues of common concern, including threats to peace and security, and in addressing the challenges of sustainable development and HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other infectious diseases.

The Millennium Development Goals remain the most significant targets agreed by the international community, as they cover the major areas of concern to the peoples of the world.

Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, experience has shown that attaining its goals requires greater international solidarity and cooperation.

By virtue of its universality, the United Nations has shown that it has the political and moral authority to tackle not only the issues I have outlined, but also all other issues of concern to mankind. The Organization must therefore be strengthened, safeguarded and adequately funded. It is for those reasons that we must continue to support the Secretary-General and the United Nations as they shoulder their responsibilities in laying the foundations for a just and lasting peace and for socio-economic development worldwide. We in Africa reiterate our firm commitment to make our contribution to the United Nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Mozambique for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Joaquim Alberto Chissano, President of the Republic of Mozambique, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Enrique Bolaños Geyer, President of the Republic of Nicaragua

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Nicaragua.

Mr. Enrique Bolaños Geyer, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Enrique Bolaños Geyer,

President of the Republic of Nicaragua, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bolaños Geyer (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the fine work done by your predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan.

All of us were shocked by the terrorist attacks on United Nations headquarters in Baghdad. In last month's attack the precious lives of several innocent United Nations staff members were lost, including that of Sergio Vieira de Mello, the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The world must not be intimidated by terrorism. The role of the United Nations as a guarantor of collective security is irreplaceable. Global security is the responsibility of all nations, just as we are all equally bound by international law.

Nicaragua has come to the General Assembly to make suggestions with regard to the building of a new world order and to cooperate actively within the multilateral system to combat, among other scourges, terrorism, corruption, drug trafficking, the illegal trafficking in arms and persons, and transnational crime, all of which are harmful to strengthening democracy and the progress of the world.

That is why we have begun a new era in Central America, in which the region will be more united than ever before and serve as a model for democratic security that includes an innovative strategy to overcome both traditional challenges and modern threats.

At the meeting of Central American Presidents that took place in Guatemala on 17 July 2003, I made a proposal for a programme for arms limitation and control in Central America to achieve a reasonable balance of forces and to foster stability, mutual trust and transparency. The idea behind my Government's proposal is to establish the necessary controls to achieve a reasonable balance in defence forces; to put in place modern policies for regional defence and public security while strengthening mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of disputes. The Central American Presidents meeting in Belize at the beginning of this month enthusiastically approved that plan. I am also pleased to inform the General Assembly that technical teams have already begun to work to implement the plan.

In the current situation, the subject of international trafficking in small arms and light weapons is equally worthy of our attention. Nicaragua will soon be the site of a major project to achieve progress in that area.

Drug trafficking is global threat that constitutes an assault on democracy and its institutions and imperils comprehensive human development. Due to our privileged geographical position, international organized crime is continuing to attempt to make inroads into our region in order to make it a gateway between producers and consumers of illicit substances. We have cut off its advance in Nicaragua, a country that enjoys high levels of domestic security. However, it is essential that we strengthen the cooperation of all international actors on the basis of shared responsibility to prevent the expansion of organized crime and increased drug use.

My country's commitment to democratic security is consistent with the struggle for peace and the establishment of a just international order. A country that has experienced war, like Nicaragua, is in a better position to make a more effective contribution to preventing war than countries that have not. We Nicaraguans have suffered the horrors and the aftermath of war. It is for that reason that Nicaragua has the ability to make a contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security.

It is also for that reason that I have come to General Assembly, namely, to convey to the Assembly the resolute desire and just aspirations of my Government and people to be elected as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the 2006-2007 term. Our candidacy has garnered increasingly strong support, which we hope to strengthen decisively in the coming months.

The fight against corruption is an unrelenting undertaking for my Government. We have achieved major successes and are proud to know we have set an example that is already being emulated by some of our sisterly countries. I wish to express my gratitude for the support of the international community, which understood our desire to bring morality to public administration. Corruption is the cause of many evils, and it takes a huge toll on the economy, in addition to undermining public and private institutions.

Nicaragua greatly appreciates efforts to develop a United Nations convention against corruption. In that

regard, we also welcome the progress made during the sixth round of meetings in Vienna, which will provide a solid foundation for the establishment of international legal norms to help combat that scourge, thereby strengthening political stability in our countries. However, the fight against corruption in my country also requires a strengthening of the judicial and electoral systems.

Resistance to change makes it difficult to make progress in those areas at the pace and scope required to meet my country's needs. I therefore recently presented to Nicaragua's political, economic and social actors my proposal for a national development plan, in order to obtain the input of all segments of Nicaraguan society. That plan also specifies the actions to be taken by every State entity in evaluating and modifying the plan to achieve the country's comprehensive development.

Nicaragua needs foreign assistance. That assistance should be coordinated in a manner that takes into account national plans and strategies pertaining to how assistance is utilized. The quality, effectiveness and impact of such cooperation should be improved by employing new ideas that lead to tangible results in the area of sustainable development. Additional new resources will also be necessary to fulfil the Millennium Development Goals.

We appreciate the United Kingdom's proposal for an international financing facility as a way to increase the flow of short-term resources by issuing negotiable instruments backed by future assistance.

Cooperation in solidarity by the international community has been particularly meaningful in the area of mine clearance in my country, where substantial progress has been made, thanks both to the fine work of national and international institutions participating in that humanitarian endeavour and the professionalism of the our army's sappers.

Nicaragua is also a thankful country. On several occasions, we have received significant amounts of humanitarian assistance from many countries. As a token of our gratitude, we have made our small, but full, contribution of humanitarian assistance to neighbouring countries in need. We are now taking part in the purely humanitarian mission involving mine clearance and the provision of medical support for the civilian population in Iraq.

However, international cooperation alone is not enough to achieve economic development. We must promote a more equitable international trade system through the World Trade Organization. In other words, what good is cooperation for productive development when there are tariff and non-tariff restrictions on trade? We want fair treatment. That is the issue, and we hope the developed countries will support us in bringing about a new trade relationship with developing countries — such as Nicaragua. With fair treatment and with markets for our products, we will have a more competitive Central American market and will attract greater investment in order to generate more jobs at fair wages, reaping the benefits of the region's strategic geographic location.

The Central American integration process has made much progress and has been one of the pillars of my foreign policy. We have achieved our most notable results in economic integration, and we have paved the way for successful negotiation of free-trade treaties with other countries and regions, such as the one we are currently working out with the United States. Nicaragua will insist on preferential treatment in our negotiations because our economy is less developed, very open and highly dependent on trade and external financing. With greater development and wealth generation, we will keep our citizens from migrating to the North or to other countries.

Peace is still only a hope in some regions of the world. Nicaragua advocates multilateral action to find peaceful solutions in keeping with international law. We are concerned at the escalation of the situation in the Middle East and its consequences, which is why we believe that the international community must contribute, through the United Nations, to finding a just and lasting peace in the region. My Government supports an immediate resumption of the peace process begun this year through the peace plan known as the road map.

We confirm our commitment to strengthening the universal vocation of the United Nations so that all peoples of the world, without exception, can be fairly represented in it. That is why I reaffirm before the Assembly the importance of considering the desire of a people with legitimate representation — the Republic of China — to participate as a full-fledged member of the United Nations.

Nicaragua recognizes its responsibility in the building of a new international order that is more humane, more just and more secure. It has been our lot to live through difficult times since that fateful day of 11 September. Let us be capable of building a different world, so that future generations will not blame us for a lack of consensus on humanity's problems requiring urgent action. Nicaragua is aware of that responsibility, and therefore we pledge to work with other Member States to defend multilateralism and to overcome current security problems, remaining united in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and in strict adherence to and respect for international law.

May God bless the Assembly, may God bless the United Nations, may God bless all peoples of the world, and may God always bless Nicaragua.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Nicaragua for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Enrique Bolaños Geyer, President of the Republic of Nicaragua, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Arnold Rüütel, President of the Republic of Estonia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Arnold Rüütel, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Arnold Rüütel, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rüütel (*spoke in Estonian; English text provided by the delegation*): Allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. That is a significant tribute to you and to Saint Lucia. Estonia, like Saint Lucia, is a small State, and together we can admit that the United Nations is an Organization that allows small States to participate on equal footing with large ones in influencing global processes. I also commend your predecessor, Mr. Jan Kavan, for his accomplishments in presiding over the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I am particularly pleased to do so in the light of the similar histories of Estonia and the Czech Republic and of our common endeavours to join the family of democratic nations, the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance.

The fifty-eighth regular session is the first since the outbreak of the war in Iraq. This year has been a difficult one, both for the United Nations and for the entire world. Long and emotional debates in the Security Council preceded the Iraq crisis. Many think that the war, rising tensions among States and the country's post-war reconstruction have tested the Organization's capabilities, its credibility and its role in the world. I should like to believe, not that the past year has undermined the Organization's morale, but the contrary. Those ordeals and the Iraq war have served as a lesson and have deepened our conviction that the United Nations should be even more decisive and efficient in the future than it is today.

Unfortunately, the crisis in Iraq has affected more than the morale of the United Nations. Although the Organization has been the target of terrorist attacks before — such an attack was planned against United Nations Headquarters many years ago — the terrorist bombings of the United Nations headquarters in Iraq a couple of days ago and on 19 August — which claimed more than 20 lives — were unprecedented. Terrorism and violence never choose their victims and it is significant that the United Nations, as an Organization for global peace and stability uniting all States of the world, was targeted.

I would like to emphasize that Estonia has resolutely condemned the terrorist attack on the United Nations mission in Baghdad. Together with all representatives here, the people of Estonia and I are in deep morning over the tragic murder of Sergio Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and others. I deeply sympathize with their relatives and colleagues.

A terrorist act against people who are committed to assisting the people of Iraq is a painful blow to the United Nations and a crime against the people of Iraq and the international community. However, it cannot serve as an impetus for the United Nations to withdraw from hot spots. Estonia welcomes the statement made by Secretary-General Kofi Annan that, despite the attacks, the United Nations will continue its activity in Iraq. Terrorists should not determine the future of Iraq

or make the people of that country and the international community withdraw from the goal of building up a sovereign, democratic and prosperous Iraq.

Recent events have even more clearly demonstrated the need for the presence of stabilization forces in Iraq. In order to enforce peace and stability in the Persian Gulf region, enhanced cooperation between coalition forces, the United Nations and the international community is necessary. Despite its small size and moderate resources, Estonia is also actively involved. In May 2003, the Estonian Parliament approved the deployment of a unit of the Estonian Defence Forces to peace enforcement operations in Iraq and Estonian servicemen joined the mission in the Persian Gulf region in June. Estonia has acceded to all 12 United Nations anti-terrorist conventions and is actively cooperating with many States and international organizations.

Now I will proceed to a central topic of my address — the environment and sustainable development. I consider a sustainable approach to the environment and sustainable development to be one of the most significant commitments, both for the United Nations and for States. In the long term, the welfare and conditions of peoples will depend primarily on our ability or will to use wisely and sparingly the limited resources of our planet and to shape the environment we live in. With respect to the ever-growing population of the world, increased production and consumption, as well as the resulting pollution, the pressure of human activity on our living environment is continuously building. In the circumstances, environmental protection and ensuring the welfare of mankind and wildlife are becoming an ever-more important and difficult task. It is not by chance that the United Nations proclaimed the year 2003 as the International Year of Fresh Water and that the year 2002 focused on eco-tourism and mountain regions.

Twenty years ago, the General Assembly adopted a resolution establishing the World Commission on Environment and Development to define global problems and to find ways of solving them. Gro Harlem Brundtland headed the Commission. The report entitled *Our Common Future*, completed in 1987, defined sustainable development. The main message of the report was that economic growth and increased welfare of the people should not compromise the ability of future generations and the environment to meet their own needs. Global economic development should take into consideration the tolerance thresholds of the environment and the need to preserve natural resources.

Sustainable development, as a cohesive development of the socio-economic field and the environment, has become a priority of most democracies throughout the world, especially after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. As the head of the Estonian delegation to the Conference, I signed Agenda 21 and the Framework Conventions on Climate Change and Biological Diversity.

Eleven years have passed since the Rio de Janeiro Conference. Considering developments since then, we see that some progress in global environmental cooperation among States has taken place. New goals were set and interim conclusions made at the special session of the General Assembly in New York in 1997 and at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. The General Assembly session in 2000 agreed on the Millennium Declaration, with the main goal set as environmental sustainability.

However, we must note that the world's population has grown by 1 billion since the Rio de Janeiro Conference in 1992. In the 1990s, the world gross domestic product grew by an average of 2.6 per cent a year. No doubt, sooner or later these processes are going to influence the living environment of us all. Although we cannot as yet define the actual relationship between human activity and the climate of our planet, a glimpse into the climate changes of the last decade is worrying. Natural phenomena like El Niño and La Niña have had a lasting impact on human life. Floods, droughts, tornadoes and extreme fluctuations of temperature have become nearly daily realities on our planet. European States have not remained untouched by the climate changes. In 1997, floods devastated Eastern Europe; last summer, Western and Central Europe were hit by a heat wave. These facts should convince us that environmental protection is a matter of common concern for all mankind.

Cooperation readiness is extremely important and Estonia has done its best to collaborate. We have acceded to all essential environmental conventions and wish all other States in the world to do the same. Estonia ratified the Framework Convention on Climate Change on 27 July 1994 and acceded to the Kyoto

Protocol on 17 November 1998. In unison with the European Union, Estonia expresses its clear determination to enforce the Kyoto Protocol as soon as possible.

Estonia is a small State with moderate resources, playing a small role in the world economy and the environment. Nevertheless, we adhere to the principle, "act local, think global". Environmental protection is extremely important. Estonia has a long tradition of nature conservation. As early as in 1297, King Erik Menved of Denmark banned cutting forests on several Estonian islands. In 1995, four years after regaining independence, Estonia adopted its Sustainable Development Act. In 2001, at the recommendation of the Committee on Sustainable Development, the Government of Estonia approved a strategy of sustainable development — Sustainable Estonia 21.

More than in any other field, inter-State cooperation is important in environmental protection, and regional organizations play a substantial role in this regard. The Baltic Sea States have displayed remarkable initiative, which other regions of the world would find worth following. The Baltic Sea regional sustainable development process was launched in 1996. It is unique in the world — an Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea States — Baltic 21. The parties to the process include all Baltic Sea States and the European Commission. The process targets the elaboration and the implementation of sustainable development visions and an action plan for the entire region and key sectors.

The Baltic Sea joins the members of the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS). It is especially appropriate to speak about the protection of the Baltic Sea in the International Year of Fresh Water. Currently, Estonia holds the CBSS presidency, and the protection of the environment, first and foremost of the Baltic Sea, is among the top priorities of the presidency. During our presidency, we would like to focus on new hazards arising from the intensifying marine traffic on the Baltic Sea. Estonia is targeting its efforts towards achieving an agreement between member States to reduce the oil-tanker-pollution hazard to a minimum. Estonia supports the initiative of the European Union to ban the traffic of single-hull tankers on the Baltic Sea, and is committed to having the Baltic Sea classified as a Particularly Sensitive Sea Area (PSSA).

I would like to conclude by stressing that, although I have touched only upon terrorism and the environment, Estonia fully shares all the priorities of the European Union (EU) at the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, particularly, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, peacekeeping, the protection of human rights and combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The future of the United Nations is also important for Estonia. The United Nations needs to be improved and restructured. Estonia has favoured the overall strengthening of our common Organization and welcomes the efforts of Secretary-General Kofi Annan to revitalize the United Nations, primarily the General Assembly. In our opinion, reform of the Security Council should enable the United Nations to participate more efficiently in problem-solving and crisis resolution throughout the world.

The Secretary-General's recent report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration is a significant and important document that deserves detailed analysis and serious consideration. Isn't it time for the United Nations family to support the Secretary-General in his concern about the Organization now and about its future? Let us agree — both the large and the small Member States — upon what we would like to accomplish and when, and let us move steadily ahead. Only a strong United Nations, with efficient decision-making mechanisms, can ensure global welfare and balance. Let that be a goal for us.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Estonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Arnold Rüütel, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ghana.

Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kufuor: The past two years have been years of near apocalyptic ordeal for the world and this great Organization. In rapid succession, the world and this Organization have been caught in what can only be described as a crossfire of terrorism, violence and wars. The uncertainties resulting from these situations are yet to be dispelled. Much of the world is still in the dark, groping for a glimpse of what the future direction of international relations and this Organization will be.

The recent unwarranted attacks against the United Nations headquarters and personnel in Baghdad, Iraq, should be roundly condemned. They should not break the will of this Organization to continue to provide humanitarian assistance and relief to the people of Iraq.

We in Ghana still believe in the United Nations as the global repository of humankind's aspiration. We believe that the problems of the twenty-first century cannot be addressed without universal commitment to multilateralism spearheaded by the United Nations. We recommend, however, that fairness, firmness, humanity and a sense of balance must characterize United Nations responses to all events of a similar nature, irrespective of where such events occur, if this Organization is to enhance its credibility and ensure its relevance in a sustained manner.

Living in the West African subregion, which has experienced more than its fair share of conflicts, my countrymen are familiar with the negative effects of conflicts, and the pain of insecurity. They also know the importance of multilateral efforts in conflict management. Hence, for more than 40 years, Ghana has demonstrated commitment to international conflict prevention and resolution and peacekeeping missions around the world, under the auspices of the United Nations, and now the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The latest is the country's participation in the ECOWAS Peace Force (ECOFORCE), in Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia.

Africa accepts its responsibility for resolving the continent's internal conflicts. Today, there is no doubt that the nations of Africa are rising to this challenge. But there is also no doubt that the continent suffers massive shortcomings in financing and technological resources. This is why the international community, especially the United Nations, under its Charter obligations, must continue to support Africa in its efforts to maintain peace. It is therefore hoped that Security Council consideration of Africa's conflicts will yield adequate, practical and timely support to resolve them.

In my current capacity as Chairman of ECOWAS, I wish to acknowledge the valuable support of the various Governments as well as international organizations, which have contributed to the efforts of the Community to achieve peace and stabilize the subregion. With this help, the Community is succeeding in resolving conflicts that have engulfed Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Sierra Leone and other nations. All of them are now, thankfully, on the way to stability and normality. I therefore seize this opportunity to express the appreciation of the Community and myself to France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, as well as the European Union and the United Nations, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to name just a few of those who have provided substantial assistance.

While ECOWAS fully appreciates the support of our friends, it must nevertheless appeal for some more resources from this Organization and the international community to enable it to consolidate the peace and normalization process. It might be necessary to stress that, in some instances within the subregion, post-conflict peace-building efforts have failed, mainly because the problems involved were not addressed in a systematic, sustained and holistic manner. In the main, such problems include the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants into regular society. ECOWAS therefore appeals for the assistance needed for their effective management.

Yet another serious continuing menace is the prevalent illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in the subregion. In this regard, we note the commendable progress made by the international community in addressing this menace through the United Nations Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons. The truth, however, is that more vigorous and resourceful effort is needed to succeed.

The Human Development Report 2003 exposes the tragedy that besets sub-Saharan Africa, and this is the most suitable platform to highlight it. The report states that the rest of the world has left sub-Saharan Africa behind, and that it will take 150 years for our region to achieve the Millennium Development Goals that Member States of this Organization had hoped to achieve by 2015. The report indicates that: "Unless

things improve, it would take sub-Saharan Africa until 2129 to achieve universal primary education, until 2147" — more than a century later than hoped — "to halve extreme poverty, and until 2165 to cut child mortality by two thirds. For hunger, no date can be set because the region's situation continues to worsen."

This is the century of the global village. How can sub-Saharan Africa, with more than 400 million people, be condemned to such a fate? Clearly, this must not be acceptable for the globalization process. This is why the international community, particularly the industrialized nations, should appreciate the urgency of the situation and offer commensurate partnership and assistance to the African Union and its initiative, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), to relaunch the continent's development.

The current leadership of the continent has resolved to nurture Africa back to prosperity within the framework of the NEPAD. Good governance — characterized by democratic constitutional rule; the rule of law; respect for human rights and property rights; accountable government and its recognition and intercourse with civil organizations; freedom of expression; private-sector promotion; religious tolerance; eradication of illiteracy; and promotion of gender balance and children's rights — is fast becoming the order of the day throughout Africa. Indeed, good governance is an article of faith of the African Union today.

Economically, the African Union is calling for partnerships, both within and outside the continent, to pool capital, technological and managerial ideas, and also markets, to promote and fast track the development of Africa into the mainstream of the global market.

At this stage, may I be permitted to express some reservations on the topical issue of world trade? It must be recognized that even as globalization is engulfing all the corners of the world, in such a manner that no part can opt out, free trade and competition, which are the hallmarks of the global market, can prove inimical and disastrous to most nations, particularly the developing and least developed countries. This will be so unless the process of globalization is properly and sensitively managed.

The reality of the situation is that most of the least developed countries are in Africa, especially sub-Saharan Africa. At the current stage of development, most of Africa is limited to exporting raw minerals and agricultural commodities. This means that unless the developed parts of the world remove subsidies for their agricultural and mineral sectors, Africa cannot be competitive. Indeed, Africa's equivalent sectors may be destroyed with dumping from the advanced parts of the world. It is also being seriously suggested that, even as the World Trade Organization (WTO) recognizes that Africa must be accorded a status of transition, or a special status for a carefully calculated period, the WTO does not seem to be propagating this necessity enough to give practical effect to it. The failure of Cancún bears witness to this. The World Trade Organization must, therefore, do its homework well to carry the poor nations with it. A combination of trade and aid must be used to assist the African Union and its component nations and to nurture their economies into competitive resourcefulness. This is the way to empower Africa and get it into the mainstream of the world market, without adding to the hardships of the already marginalized people of the continent.

This being a session devoted to the consideration of the biennial budget for 2004-2005, we hope that all Member States will work together positively to ensure that adequate funding is provided for all prioritized mandates for implementation, including those for the development and stability of Africa. In this regard, we welcome the recent establishment of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa to the Secretary-General, and look forward to the positive contribution which the Office will make to meet the numerous challenges on the continent.

My delegation is happy with the Secretary-General's renewed efforts to reform aspects of this Organization's operations and appreciates his challenge to Member States to make a bold effort towards this end. In this regard, we assure him of our full support during this session for the adoption and implementation of his renewed vision, and we endorse his report entitled "Strengthening the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1).

We also wish to reiterate the imperative need for the Security Council to be reformed, in order to ensure that it carries out its Charter obligations more effectively in the full confidence of Member States. In this regard, we subscribe wholly to the Non-Aligned Movement's position on the question of an increase in the membership of the Security Council. We also

endorse Africa's claim to have at least two permanent seats.

We sincerely hope that the Organization will be empowered to assume a central role in the current efforts to normalize the situation in the Middle East, especially in Iraq and Palestine. The strengthening of the Organization to provide this leadership will reinvigorate it to survive this century and promote the cause of peace and security in the world.

Let me conclude by thanking your predecessor for having ably guided the deliberations of the General Assembly through what was by all accounts a particularly difficult year. We are also happy to see you in the Presidency. We are confident that the General Assembly could not be in more competent hands and we wish you well.

I thank you and may God bless us all.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Ghana for the statement just made.

Mr. John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and former President of the General Assembly.

Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Republic of Algeria, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria and former President of the General Assembly, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bouteflika (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, I would like to congratulate you most warmly on your election as President of the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly, whose proceedings will undoubtedly benefit from your personal qualities and your skills and experience in international relations. I am also certain that you are an excellent successor to an excellent predecessor.

I would like also to pay tribute to our Secretary-General, for his determined efforts and dedication to the service of world peace and the fulfilment of the purposes of the United Nations.

The current session of the General Assembly takes place in a complex international situation characterized by mounting threats that imperil the purposes and role of our Organization.

Indeed, recent developments have marked the opening of a new phase of instability, uncertainty and apprehensiveness, highlighting the dangers arising from the side-stepping of our Organization in the conduct of world affairs. More than ever before, the Organization's irreplaceable role is brought to the fore, as a universal forum responsible for maintaining an international order based on peace, security and cooperation for development.

The international community finds itself squarely faced with the duty to restore its cohesion and mobilize its means and energy towards full rehabilitation of the United Nations, through the upholding, by all, of the Charter's purposes and principles, which constitute the indispensable foundations for a civilized international society.

We have to revive the strong momentum gained as a result of the Millennium Summit and further enhanced and carried forward through the role played by the United Nations in organizing a collective response against terrorism in the wake of the wanton attacks of 11 September 2001. Those attacks were truly barbaric.

Peace, security, and development issues are at the core of the mission of our Organization. Today, they require a renewal of our commitment to international cooperation, especially since we live in an increasingly interdependent world, where problems are also closely interrelated.

We strongly support the view that the United Nations remains the best place where Member States should join in collective endeavours in their quest for the common good. We should cooperate within the framework of our Organization and work together to promote development and compliance with international law, in order to lay the foundations for a stable and secure world rooted in solidarity.

Therefore, strengthening our Organization and improving its effectiveness stands as a collective task, a top priority and a shared responsibility of all Member States that seek to prevent crisis situations, address threats to international peace and security, and ensure necessary conditions for sustainable development. Among the challenges that should be confronted by the international community, I will dwell on terrorism first, because preventing and combating terrorism still requires a high level of vigilance, mobilization and multifaceted cooperation at the national, regional and international levels.

At the risk of repeating ourselves, we will continue to warn against all misconceptions and the tendentious association of terrorism with a particular religion, civilization or geographical area. Equally, we need to agree upon an accurate definition of terrorism, so as not to affect national liberation struggles and the legitimate right of peoples to self-determination. Such a clarification should be provided as part of the draft global convention against terrorism, currently on the international agenda. Launching a genuine dialogue among cultures and civilizations will be helpful in fostering rapprochement and understanding among peoples, by combating prejudiced viewpoints and narrow-minded perceptions. Situations will still be tense wherever peoples are deprived of their rights, and denied freedom and dignity.

This is the case in Palestine, where the Palestinian people are still denied the enjoyment of their right to exist, despite the universal recognition of their national rights today. The prevarication, delaying tactics and systematic repression used by Israel for decades to defer the settlement of the Palestinian problem, have now led to an explosive situation that seriously threatens regional and global peace and security.

The international community should become involved in a more decisive manner to put an end to this spiralling situation, and firmly urge Israel to fully cooperate for a global, just and lasting solution which necessarily includes the establishment of an independent and fully sovereign Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital, and the withdrawal from the Lebanese and Syrian territories remaining under occupation.

In this same sensitive region, the Iraqi people's tragic predicament endures. We must emphasize the urgent need to help them establish their own independent institutions, to exercise unhindered control over their economy and natural resources and to maintain their unity and territorial integrity. In our opinion, only the United Nations can legitimately and effectively accompany the institution-building and reconstruction of the country, and its role in these processes is of paramount importance.

In our immediate region, in Western Sahara, the people of this territory, 28 years after withdrawal of the former colonial Power, are still waiting for the right to exercise in freedom, and without constraint, their inalienable right to self determination in compliance with international legality. Algeria has consistently lent its support to the efforts of the Secretary-General and his personal envoy, as evidenced by its support of the Settlement Plan and the Huston Agreements, signed and accepted by the parties to the conflict, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Polisario Front.

By accepting the peace plan for self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, unanimously endorsed by the Security Council last July, and submitted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. James Baker, Algeria has once again shown its availability to fully contribute to the settlement of this conflict. This settlement must comply with the right of the people of the Western Sahara to decide, in sovereignty, on their destiny through a fair and free referendum of self-determination, to be organized and monitored by the United Nations.

The challenges facing the world in the fields of peace, security and economic and social development are particularly acute in Africa. This continent has endeavoured over the last few years, with resolve and determination, to settle the conflicts affecting several of its regions, thus generating and encouraging a peace dynamic.

In order to achieve its peace and developmental goals, Africa must, above all, rely on the support and enhancement of African endeavours. No doubt, however, it also needs increased international cooperation and support. The strategy of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) aims specifically at an optimal mobilization of both African and international resources, and the harmonization of these contributions through a partnership based on

mutual commitments and balanced interests and responsibilities.

The G-8 countries and European Union member States, as well as other countries and organizations that are partners of Africa, have already taken steps to focus their Africa-related policies and programmes in support of NEPAD. Such a partnership should be intensified to help Africa, which is still lagging behind, to increase the pace of its development, to catch up in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, particularly that of reducing poverty to half its present level by the year 2015.

Enhancing international cooperation is also an urgent task, in order to ensure the bases for sustained growth of the world economy, and actual integration of developing countries into the fields of production, technology and trade. Basically, there is a need to ensure the necessary conditions so that globalization will offer genuine opportunities for all. This implies promoting equitable rules of the game to advance trade, finance, investments and technology transfer.

In this connection, we are concerned that the recent World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference, held in Cancún, did not manage to draw a framework for negotiations to revitalize the Doha meeting, which was already well behind schedule. We are still convinced that the reactivation of these negotiations and their successful completion, in conformity with the development agenda, holds to a large extent the key to the growth prospects of the world's economy.

It is therefore of critical importance to overcome the remaining difficulties on the basis of an approach that takes into account the interests and concerns of all parties, as well as the need to restore the multilateral trading system's integrity, and effectively implement the special and differential treatment afforded to developing countries. Adequate international action is also required to address growing phenomena that are becoming more pronounced, such as speculative flows, money-laundering, financing of terrorism, illicit payments and bribery, as well as harmful practices in the field of corporate governance. This is needed to stimulate productive investment and ensure sustained long-term growth. It is therefore important to tap the huge investment opportunities available in the developing world, in particular, which eventually will benefit the world economy as a whole.

Significantly increasing official development assistance and acting with greater resolve to find solutions to the problem of the external debt burden of developing countries, as well as improving access to world markets for the products of the countries of the South would all go a long way towards enhancing the investment climate in those countries and towards increasing their share of world trade, which remains the ultimate goal for achieving sustained financing for development. At stake is the establishment of a new international partnership based on the equitable sharing of responsibilities and benefits.

To conclude, let me once again put on record our full confidence in our Organization, whose mission in favour of world peace and economic and social development for all peoples, remains more valid than ever. We shall therefore continue to call on all Member States without exception to contribute to enhancing the Organization's authority and to provide it with the means necessary to fulfil its responsibilities.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdelaziz Bouteflika, President of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Lucio Gutiérrez Borbúa, President of the Republic of Ecuador

The President: The Assembly will hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ecuador.

Mr. Lucio Gutiérrez Borbúa, President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Lucio Gutiérrez Borbúa, President of the Republic of Ecuador, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Gutiérrez Borbúa (*spoke in Spanish*): Ecuador, a country profoundly committed to peace, reaffirms its most categorical condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Terrorist violence can never be justified for any reason and must be fought with firmness, using all legal measures at the disposal of States to counter this global threat. The

action of terrorist organizations and networks respect no national or regional borders. The successful eradication of terrorism depends on international cooperation and the concerted action of States in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Since I assumed the presidency of my country, and now the presidency of the Andean Community, the issue of Colombia has been at the top of my agenda. My Government, on behalf of the Ecuadorian people, has expressed its concern at that conflict because we are linked to our neighbour Colombia by great ties of friendship and deep historical roots.

Because of the serious threat that conflict poses for the entire region, at the summit of the Presidents of the Rio Group, held in Cusco in May of this year, I made the following proposal. I urged Secretary-General Kofi Annan to employ his good offices to give a decisive boost to the peace process in Colombia. I called on the guerrilla movements operating in that country to sign a ceasefire agreement and to join an open and transparent dialogue, accompanied by a timetable with definite deadlines to be discussed and approved by the parties, in order to reach a lasting and peaceful solution to the Colombian conflict. That proposal was enthusiastically embraced by all the presidents of the Rio Group.

That unnecessary, fratricidal bloodshed is no longer a problem limited to Colombia or even the Andean nations. It is a conflict that increasingly threatens the peace and stability of the entire world. We must take care and act immediately before the monster becomes uncontrollable. Therefore, at this global forum, I ask for all free nations of the world not to remain passive but decisively to support the Secretary-General of the United Nations in the search for lasting peace in Colombia.

The issue of external debt should cease to be treated as a purely economic matter or as cold statistics. It must be seriously examined for what it is, a genuine human and social tragedy resulting from the immense suffering it causes among innocent people. It is too heavy a burden, preventing the progress of poor but serious countries such as Ecuador, which manages its public expenditures with great austerity and fiscal discipline at a very great social cost, in order to comply with its international financial commitments. These poor but serious countries are making profound structural reforms to bring order to salary, labour and tax arrangements. These poor but serious countries are combating corruption, social injustice and impunity. They are working tirelessly to put an end to the privileges of a gilded bureaucracy and striving to modernize their public corporations. But it is not enough: their merciless external debt absorbs the larger part of those efforts and savings.

We are not asking for gifts. We are people of honour, and we will continue to honour our obligations. We are only asking for the opportunity to grow, to become developed at a faster pace and to pay our debt, which otherwise could be perpetuated for eternity.

How can we achieve the minimum standards for education, health, growth and social welfare that are contained in the manuals of the United Nations if my country, Ecuador, must divert more than 40 per cent of its budget to servicing its foreign debt?

External debt must be dealt with urgently and seriously; the alarming figures in that respect make this clear. It is imperative that a comprehensive, historic and humanitarian agreement be reached among debtors and creditors alike to reduce the burden on the budgets of our countries, so as to increase the availability of funds for social investment, to overcome the obstacles and budget restrictions that are preventing us from moving forward with social infrastructure projects.

We will continue to meet our external debt payments; we cannot speak of true democracy if we do not pay the social debt. This is a tragedy and a source of weakness for democracy in poor but seriously committed countries such as Ecuador. This reality undermines democracy and democratic stability.

On the subject of migration, something important needs to be said. Migratory flows along natural survival lines cannot be halted by physical or legal barriers. In recent centuries, marked by colonialism, and during the first half of the twentieth century, marked by wars, millions of people left their homes and went elsewhere to seek refuge in new lands, among generous people. That is why they came to America, and America lovingly opened its arms to them.

Let me say to the people of the First World: now that the flow is the other way around, now that your children and grandchildren are going elsewhere, we are wondering why you are not opening your doors to immigrants. I would ask: if history, with its mysterious determinism, is carrying them again to other lands, will

they able to cite humanitarian reasons, or the need for reciprocity, in order to be welcomed? On behalf of America, let me say that we will once again receive others.

My Government, through our Foreign Ministry, is committed to preparing the groundwork and creating conducive conditions for the thousands of Ecuadorians who want to return home. They will be protected by broad-based programmes that serve returnees. With respect to those who decide to remain outside the country, we are endeavouring to secure temporary protected status for the undocumented, allowing them to lead a life in conditions of normalcy and dignity.

My Government also is making tremendous efforts to secure capital and foreign investments in order to generate jobs and prevent our citizens from having to leave their country, while at the same time protecting family unity.

I have the honour of presiding over a Government that is implementing a strategic plan that will allow Ecuador to achieve and consolidate sustained economic growth. One of the fundamental tasks of my Administration is the uprooting of corruption, because that phenomenon has been enemy number one of democracy, and therefore of development and prosperity, for many people in our region.

The fight against corruption is priority number one for my Administration's plan. That is what I said during my electoral campaign, and I am fulfilling my promise.

A handful of people devoid of morals, taking advantage of political and bureaucratic opportunities, seized Government funds and bank deposits. Now, using their political connections, protected by prestigious, well-paid attorneys, and abusing the generosity of the countries giving them shelter, they are enjoying with impunity the money they stole from my country — a theft that destroyed not only our nation's economy but also shattered illusions and crushed dreams and self-esteem, as well as the right to a life in conditions of dignity for millions of Ecuadorians.

Therefore, from this rostrum of honour and freedom, of equality and democracy, I ask all nations the world over and the judicial systems of those countries where those people have taken shelter for their unconditional and immediate support in bringing about the extradition of individuals wanted by Ecuador's judicial system, so that they can be tried fairly and transparently. I ask also for support in returning to Ecuador those ill-gotten funds.

Within my country, 13 million Ecuadorians have mobilized to move forward and, under my leadership, have, in eight months, made spectacular strides, as reflected by economic indicators. We have managed to control inflation, ratcheting down inflation from 12.5 per cent to 7.3 per cent a year, with forecasts for next year of 4 per cent. The trade balance deficit has been reduced by 62 per cent when comparing the period January-July 2002 with the relevant period for this year.

We signed an agreement with the International Monetary Fund that opened to us the doors to multinational credit organizations, and we have managed to open the nation to the world, with the result that foreign direct investment increased 70 per cent between January and July 2003 over the same period in 2002. Oil exports have grown by 25 per cent, and non-oil exports by 12 per cent.

Confidence in our country is evident because the financial system is functioning more smoothly. Total deposits are steadily climbing, registering an increase of 6 per cent over the past six months. International monetary reserves recorded a 35 per cent increase. External public debt, which amounted to 82 per cent of gross domestic product in 1999, has been reduced by 41 per cent in 2003. Our country's rating as a risk-fraught country has been significantly reduced. This is, without question, an achievement for my Administration, because, through this indicator, the international economic community as a whole is thus showing confidence in Ecuador.

Ecuador has great energy potential, with remaining reserves amounting to some 1.5 billion barrels and in situ reserves amounting to approximately 8.9 billion barrels.

Ecuador is opening itself to the world for investment in the energy sector. We are working on a variety of large-, medium- and small-scale hydroelectric projects to double our current energy potential.

The current Administration is working for the future — not just for the period of my presidential term but for the next 50 years. The mining sector has been extensively studied in recent years by the world's

major mining companies, which reached the determination that Ecuador has vast potential.

Now that my country is regaining its economic stability, my Administration has turned its attention to social development. This is an Administration that will pay not only its external debt, but also the social debt — the one that has struck hardest at our own people.

Ecuador is a country of many resources, natural and human. It is opening itself to the world, to foreign investment. Indeed, investment is on the rebound, because foreign capital flows into our nation during the period January-July 2003 grew by 189 per cent over the same period of the previous year. We need more investment in the oil, mining, hydroelectric, agro-industrial, and tourist sectors.

Ecuador is a country with a touch of magic, with stunning natural panoramas, cultural diversity and varied customs. Located at the centre of the world, in north-west South America, Ecuador has natural treasures such as the Galapagos Islands, the exotic Amazon jungle and majestic volcanoes such as Chimborazo and Cotopaxi.

Finally, let me say that Ecuador's international policy is focused on working for sovereignty and is based on the interests of the people whom I have the honour to represent, in the framework of unswerving support for the rule of law.

The future of global society cannot be separated from the well-being of each of the peoples of the world. If our global society is not just and equitable, if people are not free to fight for their legitimate rights and to realize their aspirations, there will be no peace and we will be unable to defeat terrorism or to eliminate poverty — the worst of human rights violations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Ecuador for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Lucio Gutiérrez Borbúa, President of the Republic of Ecuador, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency General Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Musharraf: It is with great pleasure that I extend to you, Mr. President, our warmest felicitations on your election. I also congratulate your predecessor, His Excellency Mr. Jan Kavan, for his effective leadership during the previous session of the General Assembly.

We support Secretary-General Kofi Annan's efforts to infuse a new sense of mission into the United Nations and maintain the centrality of its role in the promotion of global peace and security. We pay tribute to the memory of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello and the other United Nations officials who sacrificed their lives in the service of peace.

When the Berlin Wall collapsed, hopes revived for a new age of cooperation and peace, free from ideological confrontations. Sadly, those hopes were dashed — by ethnic cleansing in Bosnia, and then in Kosovo; by the failure to end the occupation of Palestine, leading to the revived intifada against Israeli occupation; by the brutal suppression of the Kashmiri's demand for self-determination and freedom from Indian occupation; by the unending war in Afghanistan and the international neglect which created a climate in which extremism and terrorism could breed; and by the series of international financial crises and the rise of poverty as a consequence of unequal economic globalization.

The terrible terrorist atrocity of 11 September 2001 jolted the foundations of the international system. The response has weakened al Qaeda, but it has not eliminated its associates. Terrorists have struck repeatedly around the world — in Indonesia, Tunisia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Kenya and my country, Pakistan.

The tragedy of 11 September 2001 transformed security policies and changed geopolitical calculations. Pakistan took a strategic decision, based on our principles of humanity and national interest, to support the war on terrorism. There should be no doubt whatsoever about intentions. Our actions speak louder than words. Our capabilities were limited, but they have been progressively improved. We are acting against al Qaeda and its associates very effectively. We have also acted against other organizations or groups involved in any form of terrorism. Pakistan will remain at the forefront of the war on terrorism.

The war against terrorism must be fought comprehensively, on a global front, with vision and understanding. It should not erode the moral values of our societies. It must not be hijacked by those who seek to use it as an excuse to suppress other peoples. It must not be allowed to engender a clash of civilizations — a clash between Islam and the West.

It is unfortunate that great religions — which should be a source of hope, tolerance and peace — are seen as being pitted against each other. Many Muslims believe their eternal faith is being demonized. They see Muslim peoples being cruelly suppressed for demanding freedom and equality, or targeted for discrimination and worse. On the other hand, the West perceives the Islamic world as volatile and hostile, bent upon striking at Western values. Muslims are often seen as fanatics, extremists and terrorists.

Against the background of this volatile milieu, the recent war in Iraq evoked negative reactions in most Arab and Islamic countries.

This moment in history calls for reflection, introspection and action. The thesis of a clash of civilizations is a travesty. We must bridge the gulf of misunderstanding between Islam and the West. We must be the catalysts of change, not the prophets of doom.

Islam is a faith of peace, harmony and justice. Islam is democracy in action. It upholds human rights, social equality, non-discrimination and freedom of speech. The protection of minorities is an article of faith in Islam. It does not discriminate on the basis of colour, caste, creed or religion. Our faith is dynamic, promoting constant renewal and adaptation, through the process of *ijtihad* — interpretation through consultation. Islam's vision is not trapped in any one period of history; it is modern and futuristic. Islam must not be confused with the narrow vision of a few extremists.

I believe the way forward is to adopt a two-pronged — or double-pincer — strategy to build harmony, promote moderation, oppose extremism and ensure justice. I call this the strategy of enlightened moderation.

On the one hand, Muslim nations must assume their responsibility for internal reform and renewal. They are at the crossroads. They must eschew extremism and confrontation. They must embrace the march of human civilization. They must address the deficits in their social and economic development. They must seek science and technology, higher education and human resource development.

The international community — especially the advanced countries of the West — must deliver the other pincer in this strategy of enlightened moderation. They can do so by helping to resolve political disputes and situations in which Muslim peoples are being suppressed, such as in Palestine and Kashmir; by rejecting attempts to equate terrorism with Islam; and by assisting the Muslim world in poverty alleviation and in socio-economic development. The United Nations itself has a crucial role to play in the conception and execution of the strategy of enlightened moderation.

In that context, it is clear that a consensus must be quickly developed at the United Nations on ways to restore Iraq's stability, security and sovereignty. Iraq cannot be allowed to remain an open wound. That would have an impact on the region and could inject a new dimension into the campaign against terrorism and extremism. The consensus that is developed must enable the Iraqi people, through an inclusive political process, to determine the sequence of steps leading to a fully representative Iraqi Government and to an end to occupation. The Iraqi people should assume control of their resources and of their political destiny as soon as possible. They must receive the full support of the international community, including Iraq's neighbours and the Arab and the Islamic countries, in building security and in reconstructing their country. Pakistan would be prepared to help in a collective United-Nations-sanctioned Arab and Islamic effort to help the Iraqi people, if they themselves wish us to do so.

Endeavours to stabilize Iraq will be enhanced by progress in promoting peace with justice in the Middle

East. Hopes for a just and comprehensive peace were aroused earlier this year by the Quartet's road map; those hopes have been progressively dimmed. But failure is not an option at all. The fate of the Palestinian people is the principal factor in determining public and political perceptions in the entire Islamic world. It is only progress towards a just peace that can marginalize the extremists. Therefore, we must revive faithful implementation of the road map and must realize the vision of two States, Palestine and Israel, living side by side in peace within recognized boundaries.

We must ensure successful implementation of the Bonn process in Afghanistan. The international stabilization force should be expanded and enlarged to ensure security and control over all parts of Afghanistan by President Karzai's Government. Pakistan will continue to contribute to interdicting and arresting al Qaeda and associated terrorists. We will further intensify our economic cooperation with Afghanistan. It is essential that Afghanistan's territory not be used by third countries for interference or for terrorism against Afghanistan's neighbours.

Jammu and Kashmir has been rightly described as the most dangerous dispute in the world. A just solution of that dispute holds the key to peace and security in South Asia. I am glad that India has stepped back from its dangerous and failed experiment in coercive diplomacy last year. Despite some improvement in the political atmosphere, India continues to suppress the legitimate struggle of the Kashmiri people to exercise their right of self-determination, in accordance with Security Council resolutions. It refuses Pakistan's offers of dialogue to address and resolve the Kashmir dispute once and for all.

India cites cross-border terrorism in order to reject dialogue. It knows full well that the Kashmiri struggle is indigenous. India seeks to exploit the international anti-terrorist sentiment after 11 September to delegitimize the Kashmiri freedom struggle. On the contrary, it is India which violates international law by refusing to implement Security Council resolutions and by perpetrating gross and consistent violations of human rights in Kashmir.

Once again, from this rostrum, I invite India to join Pakistan in a sustained dialogue to resolve the Kashmir dispute. I am convinced that, with goodwill, we can find a just solution which is acceptable to India, to Pakistan and, above all, to the people of Kashmir. I also invite India, jointly with Pakistan, to observe a complete ceasefire along the Line of Control in Kashmir.

Pakistan would also be prepared to encourage a general cessation of violence within Kashmir involving reciprocal obligations and restraints on Indian forces and on the Kashmir freedom movement. And, may I add, if India is genuinely concerned about infiltration across the Line of Control, we ask that it agree to a viable mechanism to monitor such infiltration on both sides of the Line. The United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan could be enlarged for that very purpose.

Apart from addressing Kashmir, sustainable security in South Asia requires India and Pakistan to institute measures to ensure mutual nuclear restraint and a conventional-arms balance. Unfortunately, India has embarked on a massive build-up of its conventional and non-conventional military capabilities — advanced offensive aircraft, ballistic and cruise missiles, anti-ballistic-missile systems, nuclear submarines and an aircraft carrier. That will destabilize South Asia and erode strategic deterrence. Those Powers which desire peace, stability and security in South Asia, and oppose the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, must review their decisions to offer such major strategic-weapons systems to India. They must contribute to maintaining arms restraint and a military balance in South Asia.

The crises and conflicts of the past decade have enhanced, not diminished, the relevance of the United Nations. The United Nations remains the central forum for dialogue and diplomacy, and it must be strengthened. The Security Council must be made more representative by increasing the number of non-permanent members. New permanent members will only expand inequality. States which occupy and suppress other peoples, and defy the resolutions of the Council, have absolutely no credentials to aspire to permanent Security Council membership.

We are on the cusp of a new millennium. It is a decisive moment in history. We must decide whether to flow with the currents that threaten confrontation and the collapse of civilizations, or to muster the collective will to chart the course of history towards a peaceful and cooperative global society. The leaders assembled

here bear an enormous responsibility to rescue our world from war and violence, poverty and pestilence; to redress inequity and impoverishment, which breed despair and destruction; and finally, to collectively construct a new global architecture of peace and prosperity for all peoples and all nations.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Pervez Musharraf, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Vicente Fox, President of the United Mexican States

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the United Mexican States.

Mr. Vicente Fox, President of the United Mexican States, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Vicente Fox, President of the United Mexican States, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Fox (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me at the outset to express my pleasure at seeing in the presidency of the General Assembly a representative of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States. I would ask you, Sir, to extend my greetings to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, along with our full recognition of his leadership, which has given this institution of ours a new impetus. I would also ask you to convey to him and to the entire staff of the United Nations our condolences over the death of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello.

We live in a world of fragile and perilous balances, the result of our collective inability to achieve genuine peace and shared well-being in the context of international legality. We are confronting today an economic globalization that is triggering imbalances to the detriment of developing countries, particularly the poorest. We are also confronting a globalization of violence, suffering the threats of terrorism as well as the war against it, and international organized crime that weakens public security and jeopardizes world peace.

We share these problems along with the responsibility to find a solution to them. No country, large or small, can overcome alone either the challenges of the present or those that will have to be met successfully in the future. The attitude that will be essential in the face of threats to international peace, security and development is that of responsibility shared among all nations.

Mexico knows that we, the peoples of the United Nations, can together ensure that hunger, intolerance, exclusion, crime and illegitimacy are banished once and for all. Together, we can guarantee every individual the right to live in human dignity and the right of future generations to grow, develop and contribute to the history of human civilization. In our Millennium Declaration, we have an irreplaceable guide on how to meet the challenges of the present and the future.

Mexico has made significant progress in terms of democracy, freedoms, gender equity, respect for minority groups, health and education, and particularly in reducing poverty and improving income distribution, as reflected in the resolute and rapid advances we have made towards the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. We have come one third of the way towards achieving those goals in the past two years alone and we shall have essentially attained them by 2010, well before the target date of 2015.

Though Mexican men and women will not be satisfied merely by achieving those goals, we know we are on the right track. Now is the time not for us to shrink from challenges, but rather to be hopeful about our joint labours and our work as a team. We feel the same about the international situation as we do about the national context.

Convinced therefore of the validity, usefulness and relevance of our Organization, Mexico appeals from this supreme global forum for shared international responsibility. This Assembly, the most representative body of humankind, is the most appropriate forum in which to call for collective action. Here the major international problems have been discussed, and here dialogue has been made the cornerstone of the effort to find solutions. Here, therefore, we must focus our efforts on achieving shared peace, security and development.

This is the first general debate of our Assembly since the Iraq war. Our Organization is at a critical and crucial juncture. The attacks on the United Nations in Baghdad have harmed our Organization and hurt us all. An attack on the United Nations is an attack on all its Members. The events in Iraq sparked a debate that ranks among the most far-reaching in the life of the United Nations. As a non-permanent member of the Security Council and, above all, assuming its responsibility as a member of the world community, Mexico has been faithful to the principle of seeking the pacific settlement of disputes, in accordance with the principles of the United Nations Charter.

We have been actively and constructively involved in negotiating resolutions and are convinced that they will lead to the swift restoration of full sovereignty and independence for the Iraqi people. One of the top priorities of our Organization is to give impetus to the process of restoring sovereignty, resulting in the establishment of a representative Government for Iraqi men and women.

The debate over the issue of Iraq requires us to act upon our commitments and change the way we think about when the use of force is legitimate, in accordance with the Charter. It is vitally important that we review States' commitments to abide by international law and the existing machinery to ensure compliance with Security Council resolutions. The agreements reached and reforms achieved will greatly and profoundly determine the future effectiveness of the United Nations and proper functioning of the collective decision-making processes that underpin the multilateral approach.

Above and beyond Iraq, the world is closely following many other major challenges. As we have noted today, the unfinished job of peace-making in the Middle East, Afghanistan, Africa and the Balkans implies new threats and challenges to international security. A particular source of concern is the increase in tensions in Asia, in light of the development of weapons of mass destruction.

We have always been a nation committed to peace, convinced that dialogue, negotiation and the law are effective conflict-resolution instruments. Today, we reaffirm that it is time to give special emphasis to diplomatic action and to work together to meet common challenges. In view of the world's present potential for destruction, it is time for us to ensure that diplomacy and negotiation get priority attention with regard to international disputes. Reaffirming the principles and values that govern our actions on the international scene, Mexico is appealing for peace and global cooperation so that, together, we can effectively foster international peace, security and development.

History teaches us that, unless great economic and social disparities, injustice, discrimination, intolerance and lack of international cooperation are addressed, we will continue to endure current threats such as terrorism. Mexico is unequivocally committed to combating terrorism. Combating it effectively requires not only better and more intense international cooperation but also new approaches to international legality. The fight against terrorism will not be effective without a new recognition of international law and a United Nations system that has sufficient capacity to ensure compliance with it.

We must confront this and other challenges by adopting a holistic view of our responsibility for maintaining and restoring peace in the world today, while tackling the structural causes of conflicts. To meet those challenges will require sustained conflict-prevention capacity, the mobilization of political will and a strategically targeted commitment of resources.

Such a perspective can be contributed only by this universal Organization, the only such body with the legitimacy, experience, capacity to convene peoples and the moral force to concert our efforts for the sake of peace and universal well-being. The response to the global challenges facing us requires a robust political effort on the part of all nations — an effort that is possible solely from within these halls.

As a nation that has always done its utmost to attain the noble objectives of the United Nations and convinced of the relevance of the principles and values that gave rise to this Organization, Mexico renews its firm commitment to the United Nations and its ideals.

Security cannot be built based on barriers or ignorance. True security and lasting peace among nations is based on mutual understanding and a demonstrated belief in equal treatment for all nations — ideals that have developed over time within this Organization.

The relevance of this Organization is undeniable. Mexico reaffirms its confidence in multilateral arrangements. We have associated ourselves with the

appeal by the Secretary-General to put forward innovative ideas and approaches geared towards reforming the United Nations. We agree with the Secretary-General's view that the international system is in crisis and with his appeal for fundamental reform of the United Nations. Members can rest assured that Mexico will make every diplomatic effort to reform and update our Organization, which the international situation necessitates. Mexico considers that real reform must be based on five specific guidelines.

The first is to strengthen our collective security system to ensure rapid responses to crises and transparent collective decision-making. The second is to guarantee support for economic and social development of States, particularly for the least-developed. The third is to guarantee respect for the sovereignty and independence of States while assuring at the same time the legitimacy and legality of international efforts to combat impunity. The fourth is to promote and protect human rights. The fifth is to increase the effectiveness of decision-making.

We must revitalize the commitment that States and nations make to observing universal norms. Reforms must concentrate on the performance of our multilateral system. The work of the Security Council demonstrates this need. Without question, debate over its composition involves the need to make it more representative and thus increase its legitimacy. Although the central issue is the functioning of the Security Council and respect for its resolutions, the discussions of the past decade have focused on expanding the membership and selecting new permanent members.

There is little worth in considering a Council with a larger membership if the resolutions that it issues are not respected or if they lack a common interpretation of the scope of their provisions. We must ensure the right kind of representativeness, limit and regulate the right of veto and call for greater transparency and for creating a more balanced relationship with the other organs of the United Nations system, particularly the General Assembly.

We must ensure that the Council does not exceed its competencies or shirk its responsibilities. Let us think democratically. Let us seek a balance between the main organs of the United Nations. Let us dare to achieve a reform of the General Assembly that will include safeguarding its quality as a universal, parliamentary forum, without abandoning its ability for decision-making and acting in a timely manner. Let us think of a new type of collective security system that is effective and balanced, which would function under the guidance of our democratic body par excellence — the General Assembly.

Inertia has caused each main organ of our Organization to act in a manner that is removed from the main purposes and objectives of the United Nations. The development agenda must be better linked to conflict prevention and peace-building activities must include mechanisms to ensure economic and social development. For that reason, we must also think about how to strengthen the Economic and Social Council and about whether we can and should turn it into an economic and social security council.

Mexico believes that reform should bring the United Nations into line with the requirements of an ever-changing world, in order to help us to overcome the existing gaps and fresh challenges. Today, faithful to the principles, values and ideals of our Organization, we have the obligation to build a new international architecture, which, with a vision for the future, leaves fratricidal conflicts and struggles behind, opens new avenues of understanding and international cooperation and forges new paths towards peace, international security and development.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the United Mexican States for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Vicente Fox, President of the United Mexican States, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Acosta Bonilla (Honduras), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 9 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Gerhard Schroeder, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by Mr. Gerhard Schroeder, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Mr. Gerhard Schroeder, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr. Gerhard Schroeder, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Schroeder (Germany) (*spoke in German; English text provided by the delegation*): I wish to begin by congratulating the President, on his election as President of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session and wish him every success with his work. I also wish to thank his predecessor, President Kavan, for the dedication with which he presided over the fifty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

I also wish to endorse the statements made by the Italian presidency on behalf of the European Union.

This year is a special one for Germany's work within the United Nations. History is both a reminder and a guide for us. Thirty years ago, on 18 September 1973, the United Nations welcomed Germany back into the fold of the family of nations. My predecessor, Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt, paved the way for that move. His standing as an anti-fascist inspired confidence for Germany. His passionate commitment to internationalism went far beyond the policy of détente in the then East-West conflict.

In 1980 he made an urgent appeal to the community of States with a report entitled "North-South, A Programme for Survival". He wrote:

> "The globalization of the dangers resulting from wars, chaos and self-destruction calls for a domestic policy that goes far beyond national borders."

We are strongly committed to this task, and I think that we Germans are not the only ones who are committed to it, because, as I said, history is our guide. It guides us towards intensive international cooperation, of course under the auspices of the United Nations, that we must strengthen through courageous reforms. It guides us towards a universal order based on the rule of law and human dignity, on good, responsible governance and prosperity that is truly shared by all people. It also guides us towards security and peace through comprehensive prevention. We must act resolutely by pursuing an effective multilateral strategy wherever peace is threatened and human rights are violated. But we must act just as resolutely to prevent conflict and create stable structures so that people can lead their lives in freedom and tolerance with one another.

Thirty years ago, Germany was a country with limited sovereignty, divided by the Iron Curtain. Today, Germany is a sovereign nation, a civil Power in the heart of a united Europe. We live in a common area of freedom, the rule of law, prosperity and social responsibility. This goes to show that development towards justice and peace is indeed possible and we shall not cease to support endeavours to that end anywhere in the world, be it in the Middle East, in Africa or in any other crisis area. Bearing in mind our own history, we are indeed assuming responsibility for a cooperative policy of peace. This we do by employing economic, political and humanitarian means.

But we are also assuming military responsibility, shoulder to shoulder with our partners in NATO and the European Union, where there is absolutely no other way to secure peace and protect human beings. Today, more than 9,000 members of the German armed forces and police are deployed on international peace missions. Our top priority is our commitment to peace in Afghanistan. Germany is willing to maintain its commitment there in the long term and we are ready to increase it beyond its present scope. The basis for such commitment is the Charter of the United Nations.

In the Unification Treaty, Germany vowed that it would only deploy its armed forces within the framework of this Charter. The Charter provides us with "the necessary building blocks to ensure that our common humanity is an inclusive one, built on values such as tolerance and dignity". These were the words of Sergio Vieira de Mello, who on 19 August 2003 fell victim to an underhanded criminal attack in Baghdad. He was killed along with 22 others, including many members of the United Nations staff working for the people of Iraq and their hopes of a better future.

We are deeply affected by their deaths and must honour them by taking on their legacy. Our response must be to strengthen the role and commitment of the United Nations in Iraq. Only the United Nations can guarantee the legitimacy required to enable the people of Iraq to speedily rebuild their country under an independent, representative Government. Germany stands ready to support such a process. We are ready to

provide humanitarian, technical and economic assistance and could also train Iraqi security personnel.

International terrorism, failing States and the dangers posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction all threaten our joint security. The obvious question is: What must be done to truly enhance security? We must capture the terrorists and their masters and destroy their infrastructure. There can be no doubt that we must prevent any further proliferation of nuclear weapons. We must strengthen the inspections regimes and pursue a policy of controlled disarmament.

But as we know from history, as well as our own experience, to follow any strategy focused narrowly on the military and the police would be a recipe for failure. Rather, what is needed is to address the root causes of terrorism and insecurity. To combat fanaticism, we must ensure social and material as well as cultural security. That can only be achieved on the basis of a broad concept of security. If we want to outlaw infamy we must put an end to lawlessness. That is the core task, indeed, of the international courts of justice and especially the International Criminal Court.

In order to win hearts and minds for freedom, peace and an open society, we must help people to acquire a greater stake in society, build better lives for them and provide them with a secure environment. Afghanistan is a good example of this. There, the international community succeeded in liberating the Afghan people from the scourge of the Taliban and al Qaeda.

At the same time, the Petersberg Conference on Afghanistan, held in Bonn under the auspices of the United Nations, created a political framework for rebuilding the country. This process needs our continued support. There must also be sustained international commitment to the task of strengthening security. In the long run, the fight against terrorism can be won only if people see that it produces tangible benefits in their everyday lives. They need to experience at first hand that being once again part of the international community means not only greater freedom and more security, but also entails better development opportunities and a greater stake in society.

There is no doubt that we have already made major strides towards realizing our common goals enshrined in the United Nations Charter. More countries than ever before now have democratic Governments. Our concerted efforts have enabled more people than ever before to put poverty behind them. But we must note that the gap between the world's rich and poor has still not been closed and the fight against hunger, injustice and oppression is still far from won. For this reason, eradicating poverty remains an imperative of our policy for peace and stability.

There has been a drastic reduction in the number of wars fought between States. In the Balkans, for example, resolute action by NATO and the United Nations enabled us to put an end to certain wars and prevent others from breaking out in the first place. Nevertheless, our world has become — and not just since the barbaric terrorist attacks in New York and Washington or indeed Bali, Casablanca, Moscow or Djerba — a dramatically more insecure place. New threats that no country in the world can tackle effectively on its own, make international cooperation more vital than ever before. Such threats also require new strategies and that is why we are all called upon to review whether the instruments available to the United Nations are still appropriate for tackling these new challenges. We all have a responsibility to ensure that people and their rights are also protected in situations other than inter-State wars. They must be protected from genocide and the consequences of random violence as well. A political commitment to comprehensive prevention must further strengthen the United Nations monopoly on the use of force as well as the institutions of international law.

Within the United Nations we need to muster the strength to launch overdue institutional reforms. My Government fully and wholeheartedly supports the proposals made by the Secretary-General. We must agree how to ensure in the future an even better allocation of abilities, skills and scarce resources. I also share the view of the Secretary-General that the legitimacy of the Security Council depends on how well it represents all nations and all regions. It is true that the Council must be reformed and enlarged. First and foremost, it must also include more representatives of the developing countries. Let me reiterate that in the context of such reform Germany is ready to assume greater responsibility.

The world of the twenty-first century offers us, its inhabitants, ample scope for change, for better or worse. Given the wealth of opportunities and the immense dangers ahead, we have no choice but to

strive for greater international partnership and expand and strengthen multilateralism. We will only be able to make our world a more secure place if we can also make it more fair and equitable. It was for that very purpose, after all, that the international community created the United Nations. That is its mandate. Let us join together to make the United Nations even stronger. Let us make sure that it can fulfil its mandate to maintain international peace and security and that it can achieve greater justice for all.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gerhard Schroeder, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Carlos Mesa Gisbert, Constitutional Vice-President of the Republic of Bolivia

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Constitutional Vice-President of the Republic of Bolivia.

Mr. Carlos Mesa Gisbert, Constitutional Vice-President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Carlos Mesa Gisbert, Constitutional Vice-President of the Republic of Bolivia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Mesa Gisbert (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Allow me to congratulate the President on his election as President of this session of the General Assembly. We wish him every success.

At the same time, it is a pleasure to greet the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, whose efforts for peace and cooperation between nations we highly value. For that reason, I take this opportunity to express, on behalf of the people of Bolivia and my Government, our sorrow and solidarity in the face of the terrorist attacks against the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad, which once again demonstrates intolerance for and lack of understanding of a peacekeeping mission, which is the only possible path in our search to resolve conflicts.

This attempt strengthens our resolve to fight without giving any quarter against terrorism in any of its forms, but, at the same time, it shows us the need to support the joint efforts of the nations of the world with policies that are debated and adopted at the United Nations. This Organization and its bodies are a fundamental forum where our voice and that of all countries of the world can be heard. For that reason, we also believe that reforms are required to give the Security Council more flexibility and balance in order to guarantee greater participation in the decision-making process.

The terrible episodes that we have recently experienced have forced us once again to reconsider the path that many nations have set for themselves in their vision for development. It is a dangerous mistake to believe that we can coexist in a world of isolated and closed compartments. It is not possible to generate growth and well-being for a privileged few and expect that the excluded great majority will look on silently from the fringes of that reality. In our opinion, the only possible path to confront the future is the paradigm of equity.

For over a half century, Bolivia has been opening democratic and participative spaces for its people. A nation such as ours, where 62 per cent of the citizens identify themselves as indigenous, must do away with the social, economic and ethnic exclusion that has been a historic millstone that our elite refused to eliminate. The process begun by us with the revolution of 1952 with its successes and set-backs of greater or lesser magnitude is part of our challenge today. This vision is also essential to defending the human rights of those citizens who have been marginalized throughout the course of our history.

For one year now, under the administration headed by President Sanchez de Lozada, within the framework of a pluralistic Congress with a very significant percentage of indigenous representatives and of very different ideological positions, we are working to overcome levels of poverty that are threatening to break down the buttresses of order and the population's faith in democracy, which has been achieved with great sacrifice by the people of Bolivia.

Our Government has broadened its political base by integrating another political party, *Nueva Fuerza*

Republicana, into the alliance between the *Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario* and the *Movimiento de la Izquierda Revolucionaria* in an effort to face an acute economic crisis that has taken the form of a persistent recession, which, fortunately, is beginning to reverse itself.

We have implemented a programme that combines efforts to increase State revenues through an increase in public investment in order to stimulate the economy and improve private contribution, create jobs and decrease social inequality. We have given priority to the most vulnerable sectors of our society with measures such as an annual solidarity bonus for all citizens over age 65 and the consolidation of free medical insurance covering mothers and children under the age of five. This task is linked to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, to which we are deeply committed.

In February of this year and a few days ago, my country lived through serious episodes of violence, which have forced us to reflect. We are aware of the fact that the last 21 years of democracy — the longest uninterrupted period in our history — are at stake as we face the legitimate pressure exercised by the marginalized sectors of our society, who deserve our attention. Unfortunately, in spite of the new democratic parliamentary participation, we have not yet been able to sustain a real and enriching dialogue about our most severe problems. I am convinced that one of our principal tasks is to generate a fundamental change in the behaviour of political parties and of every politician, but a less radical and more rational attitude of the social sectors in their relationship with the State is also indispensable.

We are going through a very difficult time, when compliance with the law and respect for the authority of the State threaten to collapse. Loss of trust in these essential elements of democracy is one of the greatest dangers to the future of our society, which will only achieve its goals if it has a credible and legitimate administration that acts with authority. We are assuming our responsibility in this area. It is the only way we can be tolerant of the ideas of others. Our aim is the urgent search for a true national encounter through national dialogue, an issue that we are deeply committed to, despite the difficulties that must be overcome.

One year ago, in this very forum, I said that our Government would make the fight against corruption a State policy. Today I am proud to say that we are fulfilling that commitment. We have established the Secretariat to Combat Corruption, whose tasks are carried out from within the very core of the State, with broad participation from all levels of society, through citizen networks and mobile brigades. In one year of work, we have made public cases of corruption involving State authorities. Corrupt civil servants have been given prison sentences and others are currently on trial for illicit acts. Furthermore, we have expanded the programmes for better management of public entities. We are launching a reform of the judiciary, strengthening a culture in which the rule of law is based on the concept of justice for all. We are also promoting a strategy that will transform political and productive institutions, especially those of the informal sector, and promoting governance that is compatible with fair human development opportunities.

Our commitment to fighting illicit drug trafficking remains unchanged. For our country, this task has meant high social, political and economic costs, paid for with the blood of the Bolivian people. The support of the international community in this fight has been an incentive and a security factor. However, our efforts require further support, proportional to the scope of its effect, in Bolivia as well as in those societies where drug consumption remains a priority problem to be solved. We shall continue to honour our commitments, but we shall also continue to insist that the international community fully assume the concept of shared responsibility.

For Bolivia, international assistance represents an invaluable support. From this rostrum, I wish to thank the nations and organizations that offer their cooperation, but I emphasize the fact that the most effective assistance is that which respects the decisions and plans of those countries that receive it. Imposing rigid and unilateral prescriptions often generates more problems than it solves.

Our continent, Latin America, has seen its role in the international concert diminished. The continent faces several core problems, one of which is the siege of its own democracy by poverty, corruption, inequality and a globalization process of which it is part, but that has not always generated positive results for the area. Integration is the only possible solution if we wish to face the future with optimism. Bolivia is working

diligently in this direction, not only because it is a part of subregional blocs, such as the Andean Community and the Common Market of the South — of which it is an associate member — but also because it promotes the integration of both regional groups into one South American body that will provide greater benefits and targeted influence in the region. As hosts for the thirteenth Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government, Bolivia is working for the genuine strengthening of that mechanism, which unites the heads of State and Government of a group of countries whose cultural, political and economic importance throughout the world is continuously growing.

In this context, the decisions that will be made to establish the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas must seek a still uncertain balance for the group of member countries, taking into account the enormous gap between the first Power in the world and the poorest nations of the continent, in a way that will truly benefit everybody. This will be possible if and when, beyond trade issues, we prioritize the transport and communications infrastructures, science, the transfer of technology and education.

The difficulties emerging from the worldwide debate on international trade are proof once again of the gap to be closed between rich and poor nations. If equity is the foremost exigency of mankind, the only true and effective response in order to achieve it is a fair trade agreement. Poor countries demand access for our products to wealthy countries under fair conditions. This urgent claim is linked to a sustained policy of subsidies and protectionism for key production sectors on the part of the most developed nations. Herein lies one of the basic causes of poverty and social tensions in the least favoured societies.

The issue of anti-personnel mines is a very sensitive one for Bolivia, not only as a matter of principle — inasmuch as these lethal artefacts continue to kill or permanently maim people throughout the world — but also because many such mines have been planted along our borders. We vehemently request the Governments responsible for planting these mines to continue their removal and destruction until the areas involved are totally free of mines.

Today, more than ever, I wish to confirm before this Assembly that Bolivia will never waive its just claim of sovereign access to the Pacific Ocean, inasmuch as we were established as an independent republic with a sea coast. This claim, which we have been making for over a century, is a product not of stubbornness or caprice, but of the lack of economic resources and huge geographic obstacles that undermine our ability to compete. Our landlocked condition is a deterrent to our growth and the well-being of our citizens, as proven by the analysis of the challenges faced by all landlocked countries. Reintegration of our condition as a maritime nation is a matter of justice and we cannot set it aside. We will therefore continue to call for solidarity and support from the community of nations. Our vocation and our destiny to be integrated with and economically complemented by our neighbours compels us to exhort the Government and people of Chile to act with a view to the future and to repair a historical wrong that has anchored Bolivia to the past century.

We are living through difficult times, complex and full of uncertainty. It is our obligation to stop and question the validity of many of the premises in which we believe. No question and no form of questioning is superfluous at a time such as this, in which the search for a clearer and fair horizon is a life or death necessity for our planet.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Constitutional Vice-President of the Republic of Bolivia for his statement.

Mr. Carlos Mesa Gisbert, Constitutional Vice-President of the Republic of Bolivia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Li Zhaoxing, Minister for Foreign Affairs of China.

Mr. Li Zhaoxing (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Please allow me warmly to congratulate Mr. Hunte, on his assumption of the presidency of the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session. I would also like to thank Mr. Jan Kavan for his valuable contribution as President of the General Assembly at its last session.

I also take this opportunity to express my heartfelt condolences on the recent tragic deaths in Baghdad of Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, and other United Nations staff members.

The twenty-first century is about to complete its third year, with hope and distress coexisting side by

side. Peace and development remain the overriding themes of the times and the shared aspirations of people of all races, colours and nationalities. The concept of democracy and equality has planted deep roots in the hearts of the people. The shared confrontation of global challenges through stronger coordination and cooperation has become the consensus of the international community.

Countries are increasingly closer in their economic relations. Advanced means of communications have made it possible to share information in real time. With their interests closely connected and intertwined, countries are finding themselves more and more like passengers in the same boat. Regional cooperation has grown substantially in both depth and scope, with cooperation mechanisms taking shape at various levels. Regional economic integration is forging ahead in many parts of the world.

There are, however, many worrisome aspects of the international situation. Local wars and conflicts continue to emerge sporadically. Although the Iraq war is over, peace remains elusive, with no end of suffering in sight for the Iraqi people. With the situation between Israel and Palestine still experiencing ups and downs, the Middle East peace process remains a long, uphill journey. In Africa, wars are still raging in some countries.

Non-traditional security concerns such as terrorism, drug-trafficking, arms proliferation, the spread of diseases and environmental degradation have become more pronounced. Given modern conditions, they can easily spread within regions or even across the world, making the security situation of human communities even more complicated.

Humankind still confronts severe challenges in its development. In the past 30 years, the number of least developed countries has doubled, reaching 50, which accounts for one quarter of the United Nations membership. The ever-widening gap between the North and South and the aggravated disparity between the rich and the poor have become a major factor breeding new conflicts and wars and undermining regional stability.

At a moment like this, people are inevitably pondering the same question: in the interest of world peace and common development, what kind of new world order should we establish in the twenty-first century?

China is of the view that the future well-being of humankind hinges on closer international cooperation and a multipolar world. We should promote democracy in international relations. Multipolarization does not mean back-pedalling into the age of spheres of influence or a replay of the now long-gone rivalry of major Powers. It simply means bringing about a new regime of international relations under which all countries — big or small, rich or poor, strong or weak — are treated as equals, and under which no country has the right to impose its will on others.

We should cultivate a new security concept based on the principles of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. Security should be maintained through cooperation, and disputes should be resolved peacefully through dialogue. The frequent use of force and the threat of its use should be avoided. The practice of building one's own security at the expense of others should be rejected.

We should support diversity in the process of development. Our world is a place of many colours and styles. A single musical note cannot make a melody, nor does a phonetic alphabet make a language. Human wisdom has produced so many civilizations, allowing us to follow different paths of development and a variety of values. It is through the exchanges, emulations and integrations of diverse cultures that human reason and wisdom shine brilliantly.

We should dedicate ourselves to the empowerment of developing countries in their large numbers. The developing countries, which make up three quarters of the world's population, should become a key pillar of a multipolar world. Without their extensive participation on an equal footing, there will be no democracy in international relations or a fair and rational world order. Without their economic revitalization, there can be no common development of all humankind to speak of.

We should step up multilateral cooperation. Multilateral cooperation in various forms should become the principal vehicle in the handling of international affairs. Countries should join hands in taking on global challenges through globalized cooperation.

In a multipolar world, countries should respect and consult with one another politically, strive for common development by helping one another economically, prosper together by drawing on one

another's cultural strengths and jointly maintain security through mutual trust, thus working hand in hand to realize the peace and prosperity of humankind.

More than half a century ago, our forefathers gathered to give birth to the United Nations. The past 58 years have seen the Organization's notable accomplishments in preserving peace in regions and around the world and in promoting human development and progress. The spirit of the United Nations Charter — characterized by such words as "to live together in peace with one another as good neighbours" and "to promote social progress and better standards of life in large freedom" — has been widely accepted in the international community.

The United Nations has become the most universal, most representative and most authoritative international organization in the world today. This is what history affirms and what reality mandates.

China maintains that in the current situation the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter should be adhered to and earnestly abided by with a view to realizing democracy, the rule of law in international relations and the mutually advantageous coexistence of the countries of the world.

In handling affairs affecting regional or international peace, all Member States are obliged to maintain the leading role and authority of the United Nations and its Security Council. China is in favour of an important role for the United Nations in Iraq's post-war arrangements and reconstruction and supports the restoration of sovereignty to the Iraqi people at an early date.

China also supports the United Nations carrying out the necessary reforms to enhance its role and effectiveness in the light of changing circumstances.

The United Nations is a microcosm of our world. The world's hope rests on a strong United Nations. In order to build a better future for humankind, it is incumbent upon us first to turn the United Nations into a forum for cooperation instead of an arena of recrimination. No country is entirely populated by saints and therefore no country should have the right to throw the stones of prejudice.

To that end, we should forsake all the old baggage of arrogance, estrangement and narrow-mindedness and let harmony, understanding and tolerance ring out loudly as the undiminished themes of this great Hall. The ocean is made great by all the rivers it takes in. Let that be the motto of all Member States.

Development is the foundation for world peace and human progress. We stand for stronger international cooperation and the achievement of common development.

The current state of affairs — in which the gap between the North and the South has been widening without pause, with some countries of the South languishing in dire poverty — must be changed without further delay. The key lies in establishing a fair and equitable new world economic order in response to the requirements of economic globalization.

An open and fair multilateral trading regime should be established and improved. The principles of mutual understanding and mutual accommodation should be followed to bring about due progress in multilateral trade talks. Close attention should be given to reforming and improving the international financial system, setting up a financial early-warning mechanism and enhancing the capacity of countries to prevent and deal with financial crises.

Stronger South-South cooperation and North-South exchanges should be promoted. The developing countries should step up their cooperation and coordination and gradually change their disadvantageous position in the economic globalization process. This coming December, the second ministerial conference of the China-Africa Cooperation Forum will be held in Addis Ababa, where the two sides will work together to deepen their equality-based and mutually beneficial cooperation and open up a new horizon in South-South cooperation.

The developed countries should also shoulder their duties and responsibilities by giving greater support to the developing countries in the areas of market access, funding, technology transfer, debt relief and trade terms.

All human communities make an organic whole when it comes to development. When hundreds of millions of fellow human beings are suffering from cold and hunger, the rich countries should not nor cannot enjoy their riches by themselves for long. The striking contrast in wealth is eroding the very dignity that all human beings share. Upon the monstrous gap

between the North and South cannot stand the great edifice of future prosperity.

While addressing the development issue, it is necessary to highlight the need for a harmonious development of the economy and society.

At present, humankind's further development is being increasingly hampered by excessive population growth, environmental degradation, energy depletion, the decline and demise of indigenous cultures, and other constraints. Sustainable development can be truly realized only when there is harmony, mutual complementarity and mutual promotion between the economy and society, and between their development and nature.

In the first half of the year, SARS struck a number of regions and countries, which testifies yet again to the crucial importance of public health in the context of development. While countries should strengthen their public health systems, the world in general should enhance its capacity to deal with major diseases and disasters through an improved globalized contingency response mechanism.

The Chinese Government supports the proposal made by the World Health Organization (WHO) and certain countries at the fifty-sixth World Health Assembly for the establishment of a global fund against SARS and is ready to contribute to it. We call on all countries to support the United Nations in its relevant activities, including incorporating public health into United Nations development programmes and other action plans and promoting regional and international cooperation in this regard.

Last fall, the Communist Party of China convened its 16th National Congress, which called for the building, during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, of a society that is well off in all respects. This past spring, a new Chinese Central Government was elected at the 10th National People's Congress — thus a smooth leadership transition was realized.

In the first half of the year, the people of China put up a heroic fight against SARS and won a resounding victory. Many friendly countries and personalities in the world, together with the World Health Organization and other United Nations agencies, have rendered us valuable support and assistance, for which I wish to express our heartfelt gratitude.

China has kept its economic growth in high gear. The first two quarters saw the nation's gross domestic product grow by 8.2 per cent over the corresponding period of last year, and foreign trade grow by 39 per cent. China's economic efficiency has improved markedly, and its reforms on all fronts are progressing in an orderly way.

Needless to say, China is a developing country. It still has a long way to go before all its citizens can live a comfortable, even affluent life. Development, therefore, remains China's top priority.

China's development requires a peaceful international and surrounding environment. We will continue to pursue an independent foreign policy of peace and will seek to play a constructive role in regional and international affairs.

China will continue to push for friendship and good-neighbourliness in the interest of peace and tranquillity in the region. Based on our support for a nuclear-free Korean peninsula on which peace and stability should be maintained, we initiated and sponsored the three-party Beijing talks and the first round of six-party talks. China remains committed to resolving the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula peacefully through dialogue and the building of a lasting peace there.

To develop, China needs the world, and a prosperous world also needs China. The market and cooperation potential unleashed by a rapidly developing China could bring fresh and immeasurable opportunities to the region and to the world at large.

We desire peace, stability and development. We aspire to equality, mutual benefit and a win-win result for all. Conforming to the tide of history, China has opted for the path of peaceful development, linking its rejuvenation with that of the region, with the interests of the majority of countries, and with the lofty cause of peace and development for humanity. We hereby pledge our continued and ever-greater contribution to world prosperity and progress.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Alexander Downer, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia.

Mr. Downer (Australia): To stand again at this podium today, representing Australia as its Foreign Minister, entering into the great conversation of nations, is an unsettling experience. Seldom has this

forum been confronted with so many dimensions of uncertainty, so many challenges to global peace, security and orderly economic reform. Seldom has its own capacity for regeneration to deal with them been so insistently put to the test.

Conor Cruise O'Brien, one of Ireland's finest writers, an official and later ambassador here, famously remarked:

> "The cynicism necessary in the approach to the United Nations must at some point be made to yield to reverence: the reverence which is appropriate to ... an institution which is humanity's prayer to itself to be saved from itself."

Recently one of Australia's foremost novelists, Frank Moorhouse, wrote a meditative essay on this theme. In it he discerned a new pair of parallel world orders:

> "For the first time in our lives, there are two very powerful agents in world affairs ... the United Nations Security Council ... and the United States."

He noted that "for all the cynicism about the futility of international intervention, pragmatically, people are being helped daily by the United Nations" and that "visionary and innovative international missions" continue to be conceived and achieved within it.

Moorhouse's estimation of the significance of the United Nations is debatable. But a combination of pragmatism, vision and reforming innovation is necessary if, as I have already warned, this Organization is to avoid frittering away its credibility and influence by failing to exercise its power effectively.

In the words of Secretary-General Annan, we should not shy away from the need to improve and, where necessary, change the structure and function of the United Nations and other international institutions to make sure they remain effective in promoting security and peace.

I alluded to the global challenges which confront us. First among them is the emergence of the "age of terror". Where once it was possible to view terrorism as the lamentable legacy of a few unsafe regions, today almost no country has been left untouched. Despite the war on terror — a war we are winning — terrorism continues to be a scourge to which neither age, nationality, religion or political affiliation provides immunity. It takes a considerable act of imaginative engagement to see these new forms of nihilism for what they really are. They are a negation of civilization and of the discourse that sustains it.

I referred earlier to the visionary and innovative work which sometimes only the United Nations can do. In that context, I want to pause to pay tribute to the Secretary-General's senior representative in Baghdad, Sergio Vieira de Mello, well known to many of you here. That such a man, engaged in such vital tasks — along with so many of his colleagues — should have been swept by a terrorist bomb into the silent democracy of death epitomizes the struggle between civilization and the unthinkable alternative.

We cannot allow terrorists to succeed in determining the course of world events. We must overwhelm their efforts to disrupt global security and prosperity, to undermine democratic countries or destabilize nation-building.

Terrorism has also created a new urgency in solving a more familiar problem — the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Efforts by rogue States to develop and traffic in weapons of mass destruction materials underpin the priority we give to non-proliferation. The possibility that weapons of mass destruction might fall into the hands of terrorists makes it an absolute imperative. Terrorism and proliferation do not occur in a vacuum — except, of course, a moral vacuum. It is no longer open to us to ignore the failed States which have become their incubators or the transnational crime on which they depend. The promotion of good governance and democratization are imperatives both morally and pragmatically. They have become preconditions for international security.

Good governance serves both global and national interests, as improved governance will fortify the United Nations itself. Without it, developing States will never be able fully to realize the opportunities that globalization presents: chiefly, the potential to erase divisions between themselves and the developed world. That can occur only if we are all prepared to accept the disciplines that global trade liberalization imposes. While the prospects, post-Cancún, do not seem particularly favourable, pursuing the Doha objectives

remains the best way to alleviate poverty and its attendant ills in the developing world.

In confronting these challenges — such as security, governance, poverty, terrorism and pandemics — collective action is likely to yield the best results, since not even the most powerful among us can bear the burden alone. Effective regional action also remains important. Australia has built, with its neighbours, a network of bilateral counter-terrorism arrangements. These enhance practical, operational-level liaison among regional security, intelligence and law enforcement agencies that have seen terror attacks prevented, networks disrupted and terrorists arrested.

Similarly, we are developing regional approaches to confront the dangers of State failure. Together with our Pacific Island Forum partners, we are restoring hope for a better future to the people of Solomon Islands. This Regional Assistance Mission has already made excellent progress in its efforts to restore law and order and to rebuild the institutions of governance. Requested by the Government of Solomon Islands and supported and implemented by Pacific island nations, the Mission is consistent with the United Nations Charter's original vision of strong regional efforts to maintain international peace and security. Indeed, we will continue to concentrate on improved standards of governance, which are central to our assistance in our own region. The Pacific Island Forum leaders recently endorsed efforts to promote more effective regional institutions and, where appropriate, the pooling of resources to ensure that services are both deliverable and sustainable.

The virtues of collective action are self-evident. But collectivity ought not serve as a mantra which is an obstacle to effective action. Sometimes the most effective means of preserving security — and indeed international law — occur alongside the traditional mechanisms of multilateral diplomacy. Australia is a strong supporter of multilateral institutions and processes, but only insofar as they are a means to an effective end.

The major global disarmament and non-proliferation treaties remain critical to setting norms of international order. But ultimately, those instruments must be enforced. States are not merely entitled, but obliged, to take action to uphold those norms, especially when the transfer of weapons of mass destruction outside internationally agreed frameworks is involved. The conviction that States must uphold international norms — particularly in relation to weapons of mass destruction — led Australia to join the coalition to disarm Iraq, and, in the same way, we recently joined with others in what is known as the Proliferation Security Initiative.

Australia believes the United Nations has a critical role in promoting international peace and security. First-hand experience in East Timor reminds us of that fact, and we look to the United Nations for continuing contributions to ensuring its stability. Australia also appreciates the work of the United Nations in rebuilding civil society in Iraq. Of the $100 million Australia has committed to humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in Iraq, much has been directed through United Nations agencies. Those are two examples in which the United Nations is playing a positive role.

Nevertheless, the role of the United Nations in international affairs is under critical scrutiny, and with good reason. The United Nations, through its Member States, needs to do much more to adapt to the evolving global environment. Australia has long been an advocate of a more focused, efficient United Nations system. The Secretary-General's reforms to date — in particular the Brahimi peacekeeping changes — have been a valuable start.

Radical and fundamental change is now needed. The Secretary-General rightly states that the General Assembly is bogged down with an unwieldy agenda and repetitive and sterile debates. We need to ask ourselves, if much of the activity of the General Assembly — or indeed of the Economic and Social Council — did not occur, what practical difference would it make, and would anyone notice?

Again, as Australia has long argued, the composition of the Security Council is out of step with geopolitical realities. The permanent membership of the Security Council should be expanded to reflect the current realities — with the addition of countries such as Japan, India, Brazil, Indonesia and an African nation.

We support an overhaul of the United Nations architecture, particularly in the light of new security threats. The functioning of all the major United Nations organs needs to be re-examined, as does the inter-relationship among them. Old shibboleths — such as the excessive homage to sovereignty, even at the

expense of the preservation of humanity and human values — should not constrain us. We must end absurd duplication of effort. We should refocus the United Nations on areas where it can and should make a very real difference. But we must be imaginative and bold.

The group system, for example, needs modernization. Australia could become part of an East Asia and Pacific grouping, and the old divide of Eastern and Western Europe should be dispensed with to reflect the new, converging European reality. That would form the basis for greater regional cooperation within the United Nations system, for greater engagement and problem-solving on a regional scale.

In short, we must work urgently on a bold blueprint for revitalization, which we should consider by the summer of next year. That is why we welcome the Secretary-General's proposal for a high-level review panel. Real commitment to change — which can be endorsed at a second San Francisco Conference — will be necessary if the United Nations is to rediscover its credibility and its promise.

The Acting President (*spoke in Spanish*): We have heard the last speaker in the general debate for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 1.50 p.m.